AT THE PISTOL'S POINT -- By SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

(Continued from the Sunday Times of April 17).

CHAPTER III—(Continued.)

"Had it not been for James Stagg this would never have happened."

Surprise held me spellbound for a moment. I could not imagine for the life of me what poor James, deep in his law cases, loving his wife and family, having no time for flirtation, nor desire for it, could have to do with the absurd error that had been committed in the little Pawmuc church.

"I do not understand," I said with some constraint. "If James has——"

"Oh, no! I did not mean it! He is a good man! Oh, please do not tell him anything to make him angry!" she cried imploringly.

My amazement grew. I stood looking at her in surprise, when I heard a slight rustling in the open window. I looked up. The bearded man was looking at us with hungry eyes.

"You are rather late," I said with some asperity. "If you had acted like a man you would have had your bride now instead of me."

He gazed with almost imbecile curiosity from Beatrice to myself.

The girl sprang to the window.

"Go, go!" she cried. "This man is a cousin to James Stagg!"

With a muttered curse he disappeared. I sat weakly down on the pulpit step. Perspiration came out on my forehead in great beads. I wiped my brow and looked at my wife. She was trembling, watching the window and watching me.

"Now, look here," I said, "evidently you fear me. Why, I know not. I do not ask. Never have I heard of such an occurrence as that in which we have been actors tonight. For the present moment, until I can get the law to remove your shackles, you are my wife. Therefore, let us talk plainly.

"You do not want to be my wife, and you need not be. There is a way to end it, but it must be by process of law. I must set forth before the court just how we were held at the point of a pistol and compelled to go through the marriage ceremony. It will then be annulled, you will be free. But, since I have seen how young you are, and how attractive. I feel some of the responsibility of your uncles. You are very young to run away with a man. Of course, all girls who run away with men are young. But I do not seek to stand in the way of your happiness. You are old enough to know your own mind. But to ease my own conscience, let me ask you, do you know this Thomas Firfin well?"

"No," she sobbed.

"But you love him?"

"No."

"But you came here to meet a man and go away with him," I continued, with some severity. "Do you love the man I saw you with when I came in here tonight?"

"Yes; oh, yes!"

"Do you know him well?"

"Yes. Oh, my God, yes!"

"Well enough to throw aside all ties of hope and friendship and brave the world with him?"

"Yes; oh, yes."

"Well," I said, half musingly, "then I have no more to say. Go, and may God in His mercy keep you from harm. Tomorrow I shall take steps to have our ridiculous marriage annulled. Watch the Utica papers. I will publish the fact. You need not come after any release unless you wish. If you do want something to show that you are free, address me at the residence of James Stagg, on Genesee Street.

"I will not keep you any longer. Your lover is waiting. As a last request, will you not accept my protection till this thing is settled, and be married in Utica, before you go away?"

In reply the girl sobbed and shook hysterically. "No!" I made out an answer.

"Well, then, shake hands; good-by. We have had an exciting time. I am sorry for you."

She put her trembling hand in mine. She did not ask me to hasten the act that would set her free. She seemed only overcome by a strong desire to join the man outside.

"Here," I said, as I reached the door. "These are your letters."

I picked up the letters her uncle had thrown down and gave them to her. Feverishly she looked at them in the lamplight. She threw all but one away. That one she tucked in the bosom of her riding habit.

"Good-by," I said again.

"Good-by," came the sobbing answer.

I stepped out into the cool June night. I felt loaded down with responsibility, I knew not why. Surely the love affairs of two strangers did not matter to me. Even though one was my wife, she would not be by tomorrow.

It was, as I had predicted, a moonlight night. I saw, some distance down the road, the patient bay still nibbling at the clover that grew along the roadside. Not far from him was the girl's little horse.

"They have left your horse," I called back to her. "Wait a minute and I'll get it."

I walked down the road to the bay and caught him easily. The little horse was shy of me, but I managed to catch the bridle. I mounted the bay and led the other animal back to the church.

It was empty. My wife was gone with her lover. All that remained to serve as a reminder of the exciting scenes I had gone through with her were two dim lamps on the pulpit and some letters on the floor. Moved by curiosity, I picked these up.

They were all in one hand, and signed Tom Firfin. She had taken the one making the appointment for the elopement.

Musing upon these strange things, and wondering how the romance would end, I turned the deserted pony loose, and rode homeward, the bay impatient for his supper and bed, and I impatient for a talk with James.

CHAPTER IV.

A Narrative of Unpleasant Character.

It was almost midnight when the bay turned his impatient nose in the gate of my cousin's yard. No sooner had his well-known step sounded on the gravel of the drive than the library window was thrown open.

"Oh, Arnold, is that you?" came the voice of James. "You seem to have been making a night of it."

"A night of it! I should say I had," I replied, as I dismounted and turned the bay over to the sleepy groom.

I went at once into the brilliantly lighted library.

"I was quite alarmed," said James, from his chair by the center table. "I sat up, not knowing what else to—great heavens, man! What's the matter? You are as white as a ghost! Here, let me give you a glass of sherry."

The good fellow hurried to a little cabinet, took therefrom a decanter and two glasses. He filled both and handed one to me.

"Drink that," he said, "and then for goodness' sake tell me what has happened."

I drained the glass, set it down, and laughed.

"How do you know anything has happened?" I asked.

"How do I know? You come galloping in here at this hour of the night, with the foam on the bay shining in the moonlight, and your own face as pale as chalk. How do I know? Why, it is written on your cheeks, in your eyes, in your trembling hand. Gad! Thornton ought to see you now."

"I don't agree with you," I said, trying to appear at ease. "I wouldn't like Thornton to see me now. But you are right; something has happened. Something very queer. But before I tell you what, just relieve my anxious curiosity. Who are the Lees?

"Eh?" What Lees? Plenty of Lees in Utica.

"I am not concerned with the Lees of Utica. I mean the Lees out near the old Pawmuc Mills."

James stared at me with his eyes and mouth open, denoting the greatest astonishment.

"The Lees of Pawmuc Mills! What, under heaven, have you to do with the Lees of Pawmuc Mills?"

"Oh, well," said I, with ridiculous effort to appear at ease, "I have just been married to Beatrice Forrest, their niece."

James sprang to his feet as though an electric shock had sent him upward.

"What! Married to—my God! You are mad!"

"I'm not so mad as I was. I've been mad as the devil, I assure you. But what I say is true. For a short time, at least, Beatrice Forrest is my wife."

James sat down again and stretched himself as if he were trying to waken from a bad dream.

"But—but—I did not know you had ever heard about Beatrice Forrest!"

"I never heard of her until about thirty minutes or less before we were married."

James passed his hand over his brow helplessly.

"What is this you are telling me You are not really married to Bob Forrest's daughter?"

"I don't pretend to know anything about Bob Forrest. I am married to Beatrice, the niece of Parson Lee."

For a whole minute he stared at me.

"My God!" I heard him breathe. "Do you know—did you know what you were doing?"

"Perfectly. I was trying to prevent a bullet going through my head."

He leaped to his feet and began pacing up and down the room, evidently violently agitated.

"You seem to know them," I said. "She—that is—she spoke of you."

A laugh—which seemed at that minute almost sardonic—came from the lips of James.

"Spoke of me, eh! Cursed me, I suppose!"

"Not exactly. But I am not getting any information. Just calm yourself, and remember that I am in a peculiar position. I have a wife and am asking you who she is."

At that James sat down and laughed. A perfect storm of violent mirth came from him. It shocked and surprised me; for, as a rule, my cousin was one of the most self-contained of men.

"You—you—a New Yorker—come up here—for absolute rest—oh, it is too much. But now look here. Before I tell you a thing, you give me your yarn. I don't believe it yet. I cannot believe you have been so mad as to marry the daughter of a convicted murderer."

"A what?" I roared, now in my turn springing to my feet.

"A convicted murderer. Bob Forrest is serving a life sentence in Auburn prison for the murder of Jake Brand of Saugucket."

I sank quivering into my chair. Some feeling of horror swept over me, but with it there came a whisper of caution.

Caution of what? I could not tell. The girl had chosen her own lover. All that remained for me to do was to set her free and let her alone.

My cousin's hand trembled more than mine, as he poured out two more glasses of sherry.

"Drink this and tell me," he said. "Drink! One of us will surely collapse. Now go ahead. Tell me what devilish scrape you are in."

I drained the glass, pulled my shattered nerves together, and plunged into the tale.

I began at the beginning, which I fancied must be at the point where I had information about the old grass-covered road that formerly led to Pawmuc Mills. I left out nothing. I told of my strange fancies concerning a tragedy. I told of going into the churchyard and studying the headstones. I told of finding the name of "Mary, beloved wife of Robert Forrest." I told of the appearance of the bearded man, then of the veiled lady.

I told of my sensation of pity, which prompted me to rush in and warn the two lovers when I saw the four horsemen coming toward the church. I told of the awful rage of the uncles when they found me supporting the half-fainting girl. I told of the ludicrous mistake they made of insisting that I was Thomas Firfin.

I made it clear that the girl had without doubt come there intending to elope with the man. I remembered every word in the letters and repeated them.

James sat like one in a trance, with his eyes growing wilder as I advanced. He sat with a rigidity that was painful His steady unwavering gaze disconcerted me.

I went on to tell how the parson proposed to send them away man and wife, but unfortunately got the wrong man. My efforts to escape, the manner in which they received the information that I was James Stagg's cousin, the whole miserable picture was presented to James just as it was impressed so vividly on my own mind.

I told how I had asked her if she loved the man with whom she was going to elope, and how I went back with her horse, only to find her gone.

When I had finished James did not move. He sat like one entranced. I grew impatient.

"Well," I said testily, "I have told you the yarn. Now satisfy my curiosity and tell me how to get out of the scrape. Of course, the marriage can be annulled."

"Yes," answered James, struggling up through a weight of some emotion unknown to me. "Yes, the marriage can easily be annulled."

"Then, that is taking the worst of it off. Now go ahead and tell me who this erring young woman is. In short, make me acquainted with my wife."

James shuddered. He reached again for the sherry and once more braced his nerves. The clock struck the half hour. It was growing late, but neither of us thought of that.

"My dear cousin," he began, calming himself and now speaking in his usual well modulated voice, "I have been grossly neglectful of you. I should have paid more attention to the demands of hospitality. I feel that I am, in some degree, responsible for this horrible thing that has come upon you."

"Oh, relieve your mind," I said, somewhat shortly. "I am, as a rule, perfectly able to take care of myself. Had you trotted around with me twenty hours of the twenty-four, I don't see that it would alter things. I might have happened to be there just the same. It even might have happened to you. And think how much better it is as it is. I am not married—you with a wife and family, why, even at the point of a pistol it might be unpleasant."

"Yes, rather," assented my cousin. "But don't interrupt. Let me recall this whole story, and I will acquaint you with the history of the—the—your wife."

A case of cigars lay on the table and I took one. I settled myself in an easy chair, for I knew I was going to hear something interesting.

"Go ahead," I told him.

"I never knew very much about the Lees," said James, "except that they were well to do country people. I learned when the trial took place that John Lee had once been the proprietor of Pawmuc Mills. It was merely a small mill, but any mill around here is called mills. It was a sort of knitting factory, I believe, and gave employment to about 200 hands. The mill and the houses that sheltered those employes who did not live on farms or in nearby villages were all there was to the village of Pawmuc.

"John Lee lived in a fine house—in fact, he lives there yet—on a place called Shadelands. His brother, William Lee, is a clergyman. John Lee built the little white church, and there his brother William, who had really retired from active work some time before, preached every Sunday to the employes. Pawmuc Mills received its power from the little stream of which you saw the remains. When that stream dried up Lee spoke of removing his works to a more favored locality.

"One day the mill burned down. Lee was rich and was getting on in years, and modern methods had left him a little behind the procession. So he never reopened anywhere. That ended the village of Pawmuc. There was nothing to keep everyone there. But William continued, and still continues, to preach in the little white church to such of the farmers round who wish to go to hear him.

"William Lee is not rich. He lives in a small cottage on a piece of ground John gave him. He has a son, James, rather a shiftless individual, I judge.

"But now we get on a little further The Lees had a sister, Mary, younger than themselves. Mary Lee lived with John, and was, so far as I can learn, a handsome woman of considerable talent and education. She married a man named Robert Forrest, who was foreman in Jake Brand's woolen mill at Saugucket, in the Sauquoit Valley.

"This Brand was a shrewd, hard-headed man, capable in business, and close as a miser. He never employed a cashier, but handled all his money himself, paying off the hands, and all that.

"About five years ago, as you can see by that stone in the churchyard, Mary Forrest died. Your suspicion of a tragedy there was all wrong. She died of natural causes, attended, so I understand, by her brothers and her husband, who had always been a loving and kind family man. Mary left a daughter twelve years of age, a bright, pretty child—now, I believe, according to your story, your wife.

"Forrest, so the tale runs, grew melancholy after his wife's death. He did not marry again. His little girl, Beatrice, was living with her uncle, John Lee at Shadelands. Forrest grew more and more restless, until at last, about four years ago, one year after his wife's death, he bade his little girl and his brother-in-law good-by, packed his grip and went off to seek his fortune.

"Things went along all right, and the little girl was educated by her uncle, and grew into a very lovely young lady. A very young lady, because she cannot be more than seventeen now. Then, suddenly, Robert Forrest came back.

"He was overjoyed to see his little Beatrice again. He went right to Lee's house, and from his general talk it was gathered that while he had had some success, he had not returned with any great fortune.

"Now we come to the tragedy. Forrest had been home only two days when he went to see his old employer, Jake Brand. But I am getting on too fast. I don't want to tell this part as a story, and then go over it again as testimony. I'll jump here, if you please.

"On the 15th of September of last year, Jake Brand left Saugucket, as was his custom twice each month, to drive to the First National Bank of Utica, to draw the money to pay his hands. Two weeks' pay for 200 people, besides such money as Brand would probably need to make payments in business, for private use, and all that, would foot up into a tidy sum.

"His horse trotted into his yard at Saugucket at 4 o'clock that afternoon, with Brand crouched down in the wagon, dead.

"The satchel in which he usually carried the money was in the wagon, but opened and rifled.

"Of course, I was at once notified, and spurred myself and the detective force to find the murderer and robber. This was not at all difficult. It was Robert Forrest."

I was growing uneasy. The story James was telling me was absorbingly interesting. It was altogether too much so.

"You jump to the guilt at once," I said. "What was the evidence?"

James smiled.

"I forgot that he was now your—no, no! Pardon men. I will give you both sides of the argument. Forrest was arrested, and protested that he was innocent. The case for the people, as I presented it, consisted of these salient points:

"Forrest had signified his intention of making a visit to Brand, speaking as if they had been friends, whereas the truth was that Brand had simply been Forrest's employer. He had gone there. He arrived just as Brand was getting ready to drive to the bank at Utica. He either invited himself, or accepted Brand's invitation to drive with him.

"Brand did go to the bank, where he drew $7,500. Forrest drew from his private acount $1,200. They started back to Saugucket. Brand alone reached there and he was dead and the $7,500 were gone.

"Now, here you must remember the thread, for when I tell you the people's case I will give you the defense.

"Forrest was arrested on the testimony of his nephew, James Lee, and another young man, Ellis Enland, who had been out shooting that afternoon. They swore on the stand that they saw Brand and Forrest drive past the road that led to Lee's place, called Shadelands, where Forrest was stopping. They happened to be on a knoll, from which they had a view of a long stretch of road.

"The two continued along at an easy pace until they had reached a bit of the road sheltered from view by trees, yet perfectly open to the vision of the young men on the hill. Here the wagon stopped, and the two men were acting as if engaged in an altercation.

"Forrest was seen to put out his hand as if touching Brand's shoulder. Brand raised his hands as if to ward off a blow. Then the two were so close together that the eyewitnesses could not tell just what was taking place. Then Forrest stepped from the wagon, spent a few minutes fumbling with something in it, and then struck off toward Shadelands—Lee's place—through a coppice of oak that fringed the farm of a hay farmer near Lee's. The horse jogged on and eventually reached Brand's home in Saugucket, where the man was discovered to be dead in the wagon.

"As soon as I discovered these things from Lee and Enland I at once arrested Forrest. Something like $1,400 was found on him. The remainder was never found

"Now we come to Forrest's defense. He admitted that he had driven to the bank with Brand. He could not deny it, for he was seen in the bank, he drew money, the tellers remembered it, and he was seen by a thousand people who knew him or Brand on the street. He stated, however, in his defense, that he had gone to see Brand about returning a loan of $2,000 which Brand had advanced without security, when he, Forrest, went away two years or three years before.

(To be continued next Sunday.)

"MAD" ANTHONY WAYNE.

Wayne was one of the leading spirits of the American Revolution. He served throughout the war, most of the time with the rank of general. What he was as a boy will interest readers, and this they may learn from his biography, written by John R. Spear.

When he was about fifteen years old Wayne was attending a school taught by his uncle, Gilbert (or Gabriel) Wayne, and this uncle, exasperated at the boy's conduct, wrote the following letter to Anthony's father, Isaac Wayne:

"I really expect that parental affection blinds you, and that you have mistaken your son's capacity. What he may be best qualified for I know not. One thing I am certain of—he will never make a scholar. He may, perhaps, make a soldier. He has already distracted the brains of two-thirds of the boys under my charge by rehearsals of battles, sieges, etc.

"They exhibit more the appearance of Indians and harlequins than of students—this one decorated with a cap of many colors, other habited in coats as variegated, like Joseph's of old; some laid up with broken heads and black eyes. During noon, in place of the usual games of amusement, he has the boys employed in throwing up redoubts, skirmishing, etc.

"I must be candid with you, brother Isaac. Unless Anthony pays more attention to his books I shall be under the painful necessity of dismissing him from the school."